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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Professor Awarded \$3.3 Million NIH Grant to Study Fathers' Health During Pregnancy

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Not many pregnancy studies focus on dads, but Cal Poly kinesiology professor Todd Hagobian is changing that. Hagobian recently received a \$3.3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study whether mothers who change their eating and exercise habits during pregnancy will rub off on fathers.

“Pregnancy is a teachable moment. Moms want to be healthy for the baby,” Hagobian said. “We want to find out, is it actually a teachable moment for the dads, too?”

In 2011, Suzanne Phelan, also a professor in the Kinesiology Department, began a research intervention with obese moms to help them gain an appropriate amount of weight during pregnancy. Hagobian would study the same population but concentrate on the dads.

The research is entering uncharted waters. “There's absolutely no data on dads during pregnancy,” Hagobian said.

Hagobian hypothesizes that if moms lose weight, dads will, too. That's because in most families, women are the nutritional gatekeepers. “Maybe dads will also be more motivated to be physically active, to eat healthier, and to change their lifestyle now that they're going to have a baby,” he said.

The grant will provide real-world research opportunities for students. Undergraduates will be involved in all aspects of data collection, working with study participants to take measurements such as height and weight.

“Students will gain experience in high quality research that's comparable with research done at R1 institutions like Harvard and Stanford,” Hagobian said.

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